



# **Bridging the Climate Housing Divide**

**June 15, 2023**





San Francisco Chronicle

## Redwood City a Bay Area model in housing production



J.K. Dineen

May 7, 2021 | Updated: May 10, 2021 10:43 p.m.



**PENINSULA**  
**CLEAN ENERGY**

ENVIRONMENT  
**AMERICA**

## Mayors for building electrification: Redwood City Mayor Giselle Hale

ad organizer, Mayor Giselle Hale is paving the way for all-electric  
ig powered by clean energy in Redwood City.

## Our path to 24/7 ren

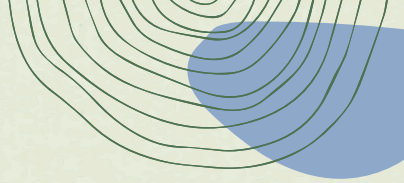
December 1, 2021





Office of Governor  
**GAVIN NEWSOM**



# Governor Newsom Announces 11 New Jurisdictions to Receive a Prohousing Designation for Accelerating Housing Production



# **What is the link between infill housing and climate change?**





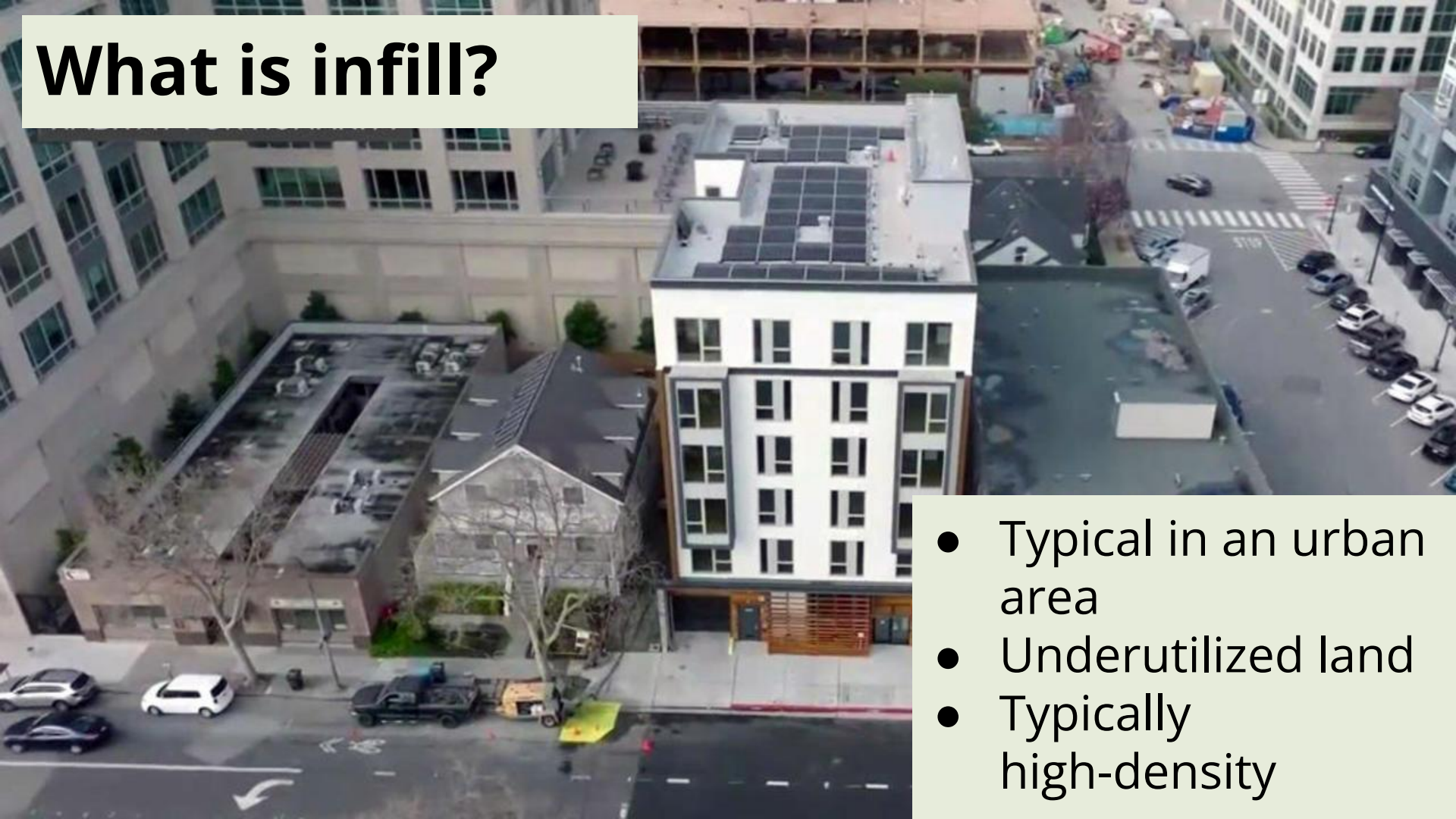
# What is sprawl?



- On the edge of urban area
- Extends out into open space
- Typically low-density



# What is infill?





- Typical in an urban area
- Underutilized land
- Typically high-density



# Reality: infill reduces GHGs

- Less driving to jobs, services, schools, shopping
- Facilitates transit and non-car modes of travel
- Lowers water and electricity use
- Allows open space to remain a carbon sink
- Facilitates more sustainable city design (e.g. stormwater facilities, water recycling, etc.)
- Fewer roads to construct and maintain



# **3 in 4 Americans believe that it's better for the environment if houses are built further apart.**

According to a recent YouGov survey



*"Someone who lives in a leafy suburb, let alone in a rural area, is surrounded by more greenery than someone in an urban high-rise. So wouldn't the nation as a whole be greener if everyone spread out more?"*



*-Paul Krugman, NY Times "How Green is Your Metropolis" April 2022*



# Let's put that in economic terms



*"Imagine taking a square mile of Manhattan holding about 70,000 people....These people would then occupy about 35 square miles."*

1  
mi<sup>2</sup>



70,000  
Manhattan  
residents



Spread out  
to a typical  
suburban  
density



35 mi<sup>2</sup>

# “ Infill”

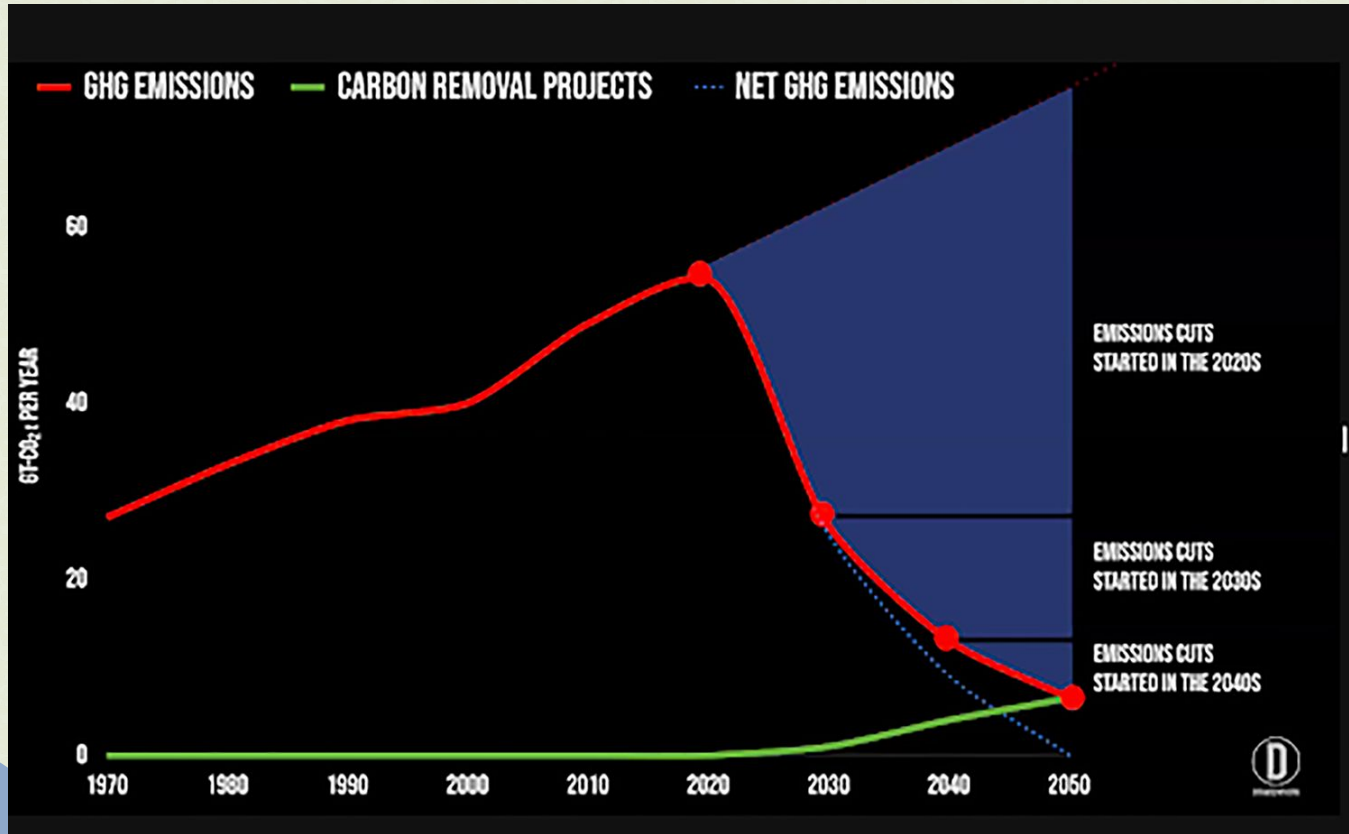





# “Sprawl”



# We need to bank climate savings





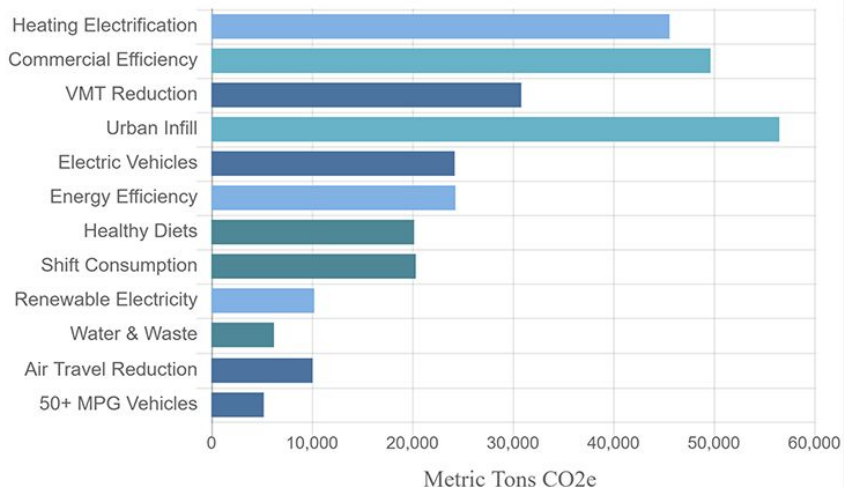


**What's are greatest local  
policy levers we have to  
quickly reduce GHG  
emissions?**

# #1 impact: Infill housing

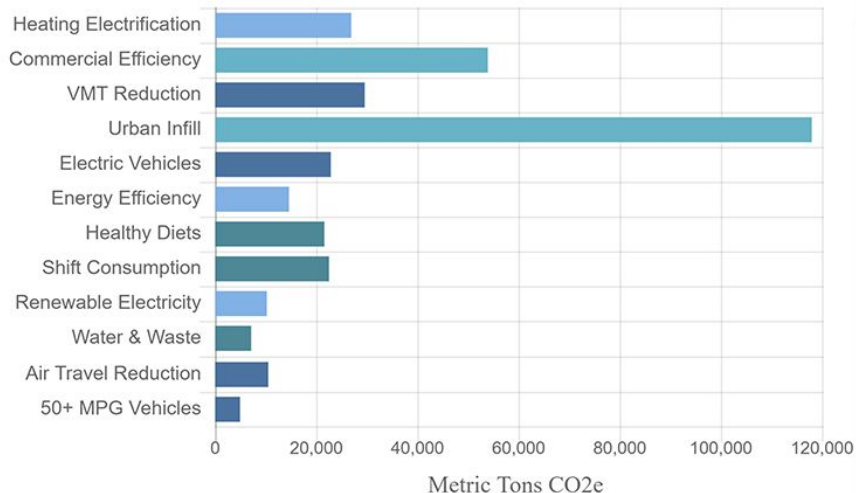
## MENLO PARK

### GHG Reduction Potential in 2030 from Local Policies



## MOUNTAIN VIEW

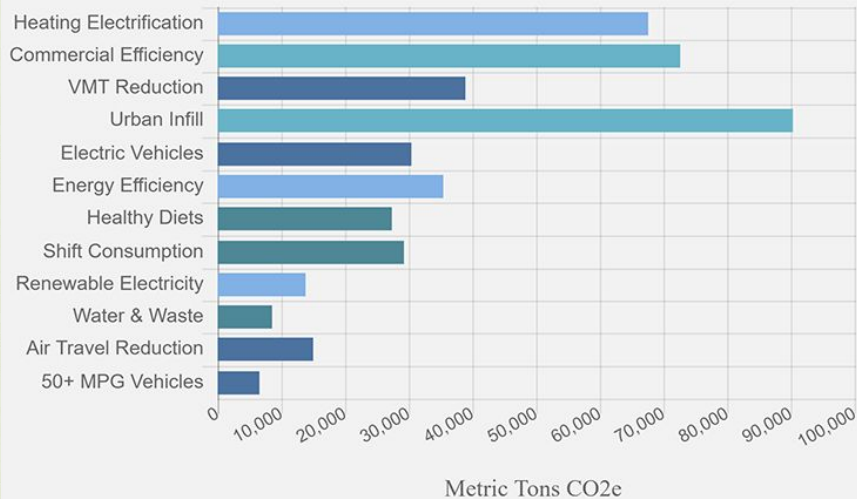
### GHG Reduction Potential in 2030 from Local Policies





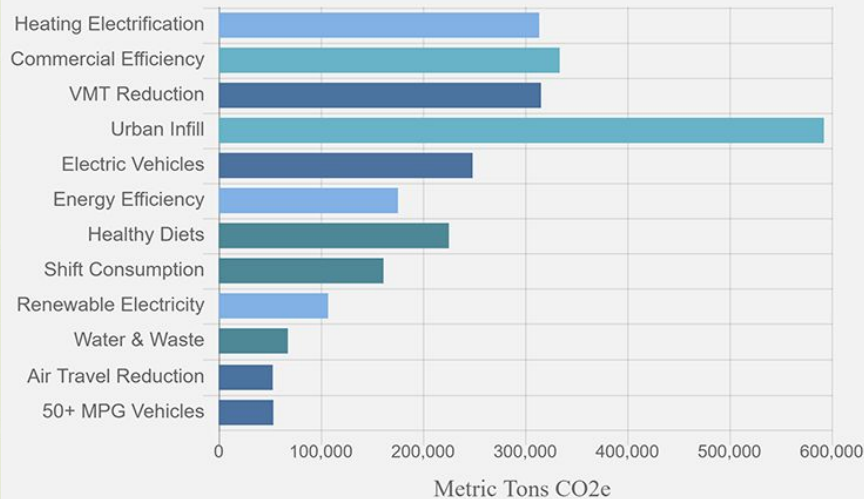
PALO ALTO

### GHG Reduction Potential in 2030 from Local Policies



REDWOOD CITY

### GHG Reduction Potential in 2030 from Local Policies



1,988 units RHNA-required, 744 units built

2,789 units RHNA-required, 2,895 units built

# Tonight's speakers



**Alice Kaufman**  
**Policy and**  
**Advocacy Director**  
**Green Foothills**




**Jordan Grimes**  
**Resilience Manager**  
**Greenbelt Alliance**



**Liz O'Donoghue**  
**The Nature Conservancy**  
**Director, Sustainable and**  
**Resilient Communities**  
**Strategy**






**Do you see the connection  
between climate change and  
housing policy**

**OR**

**What is the obstacle in  
convincing others the  
connection it exists?**





# Bridging the Climate/Housing Gap

**June 15, 2023**

**Alice Kaufman, Policy and Advocacy Director  
Green Foothills**



An aerial photograph of a vast landscape featuring rolling green hills in the foreground and middle ground. A large, irregularly shaped pond or wetland area is situated in the center. In the background, a town or city is visible, followed by more distant hills under a sky filled with large, white clouds. The overall scene is lush and green, suggesting a natural or agricultural setting.

[greenfoothills.org](http://greenfoothills.org)

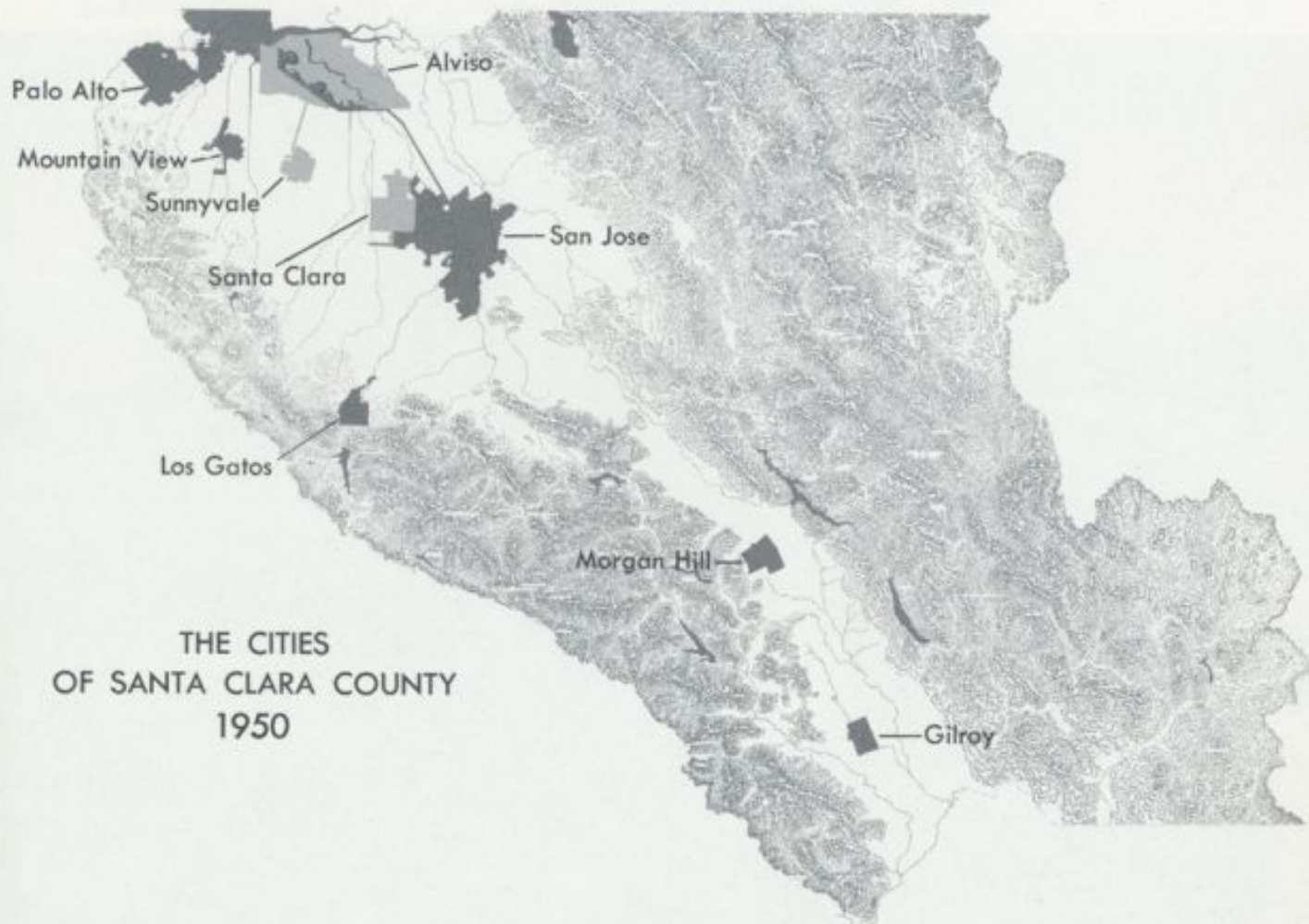






# History of Bay Area sprawl

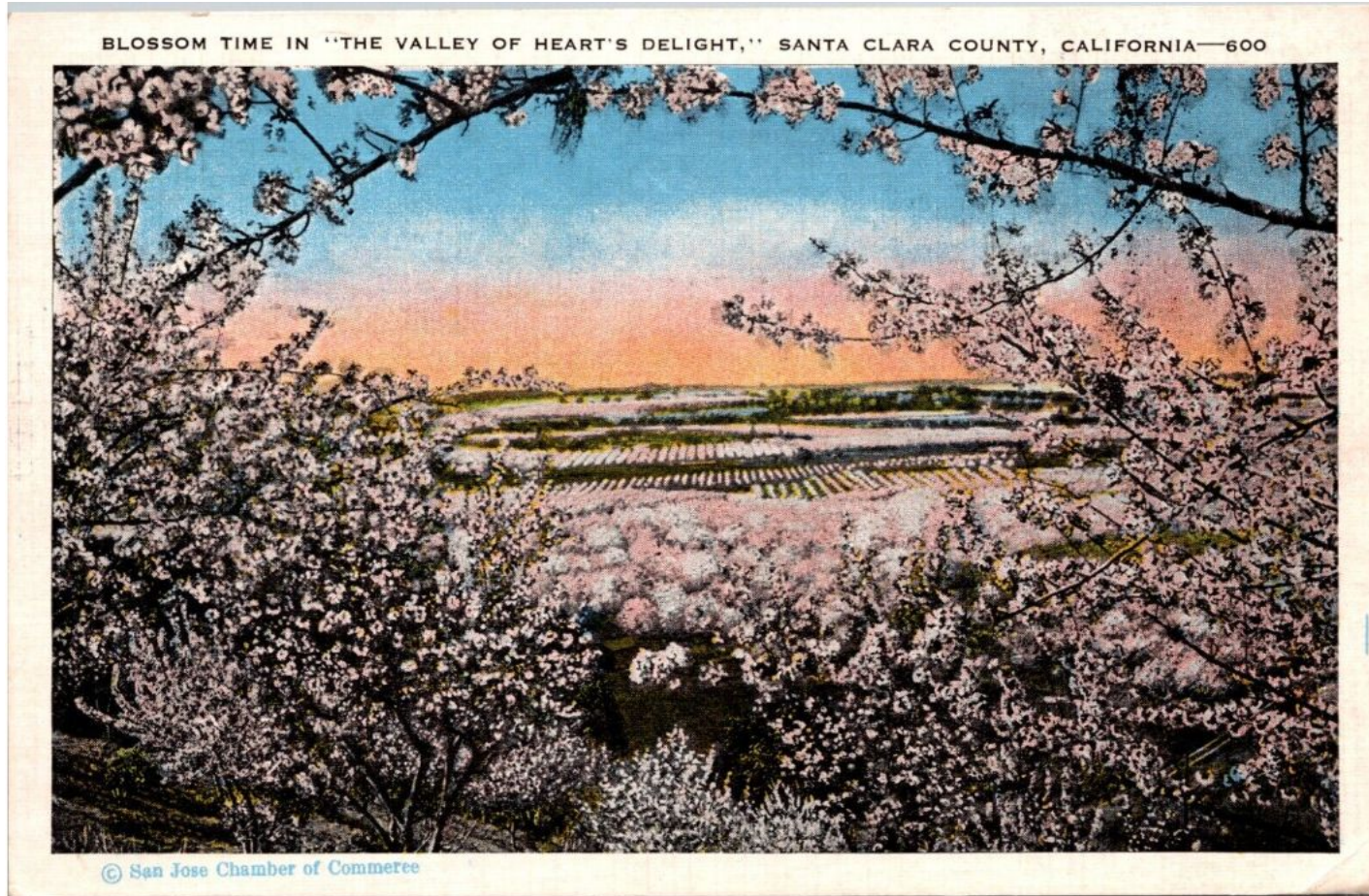




THE CITIES  
OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY  
1950

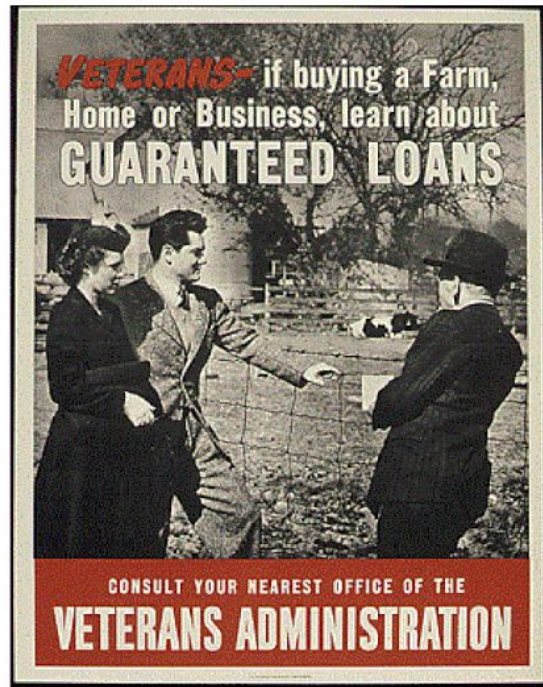


# Santa Clara County – “Valley of Heart’s Delight”

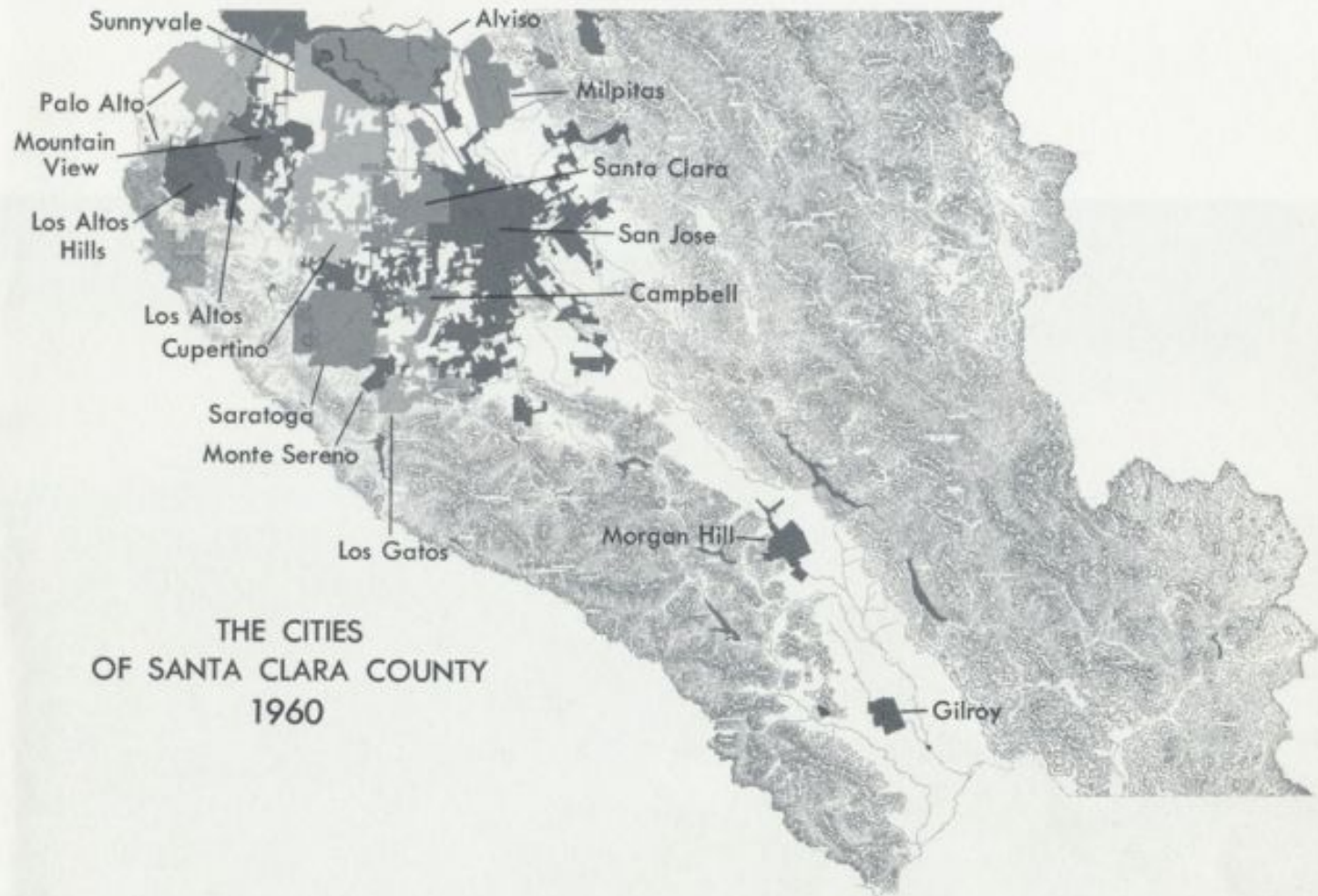


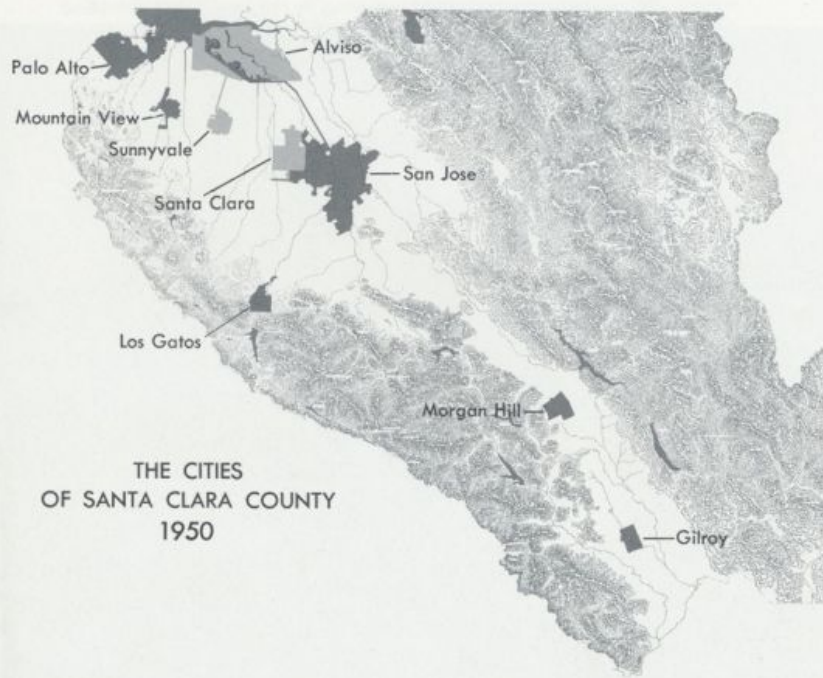
# Post-WWII population boom

- G.I. Bill
- Plenty of jobs, plenty of land for new homes

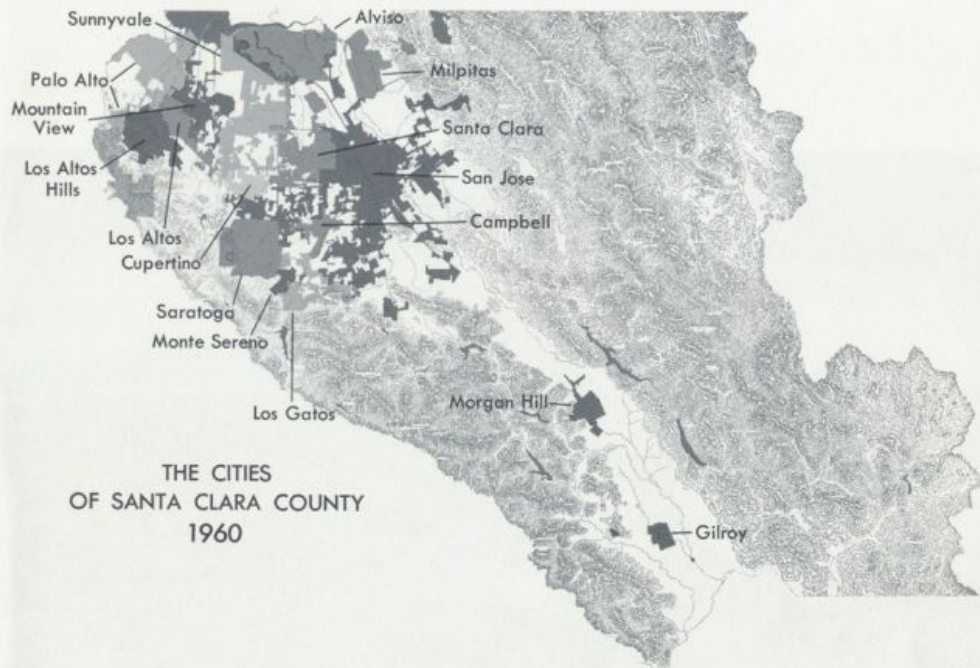








THE CITIES  
OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY  
1950



THE CITIES  
OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY  
1960





**Child attacked by mountain  
lion in unincorporated San  
Mateo County**





# Sprawl is expensive





# Density can include nature



Conceptual renderings from  
Google's North Bayshore  
Master Plan in Mountain View





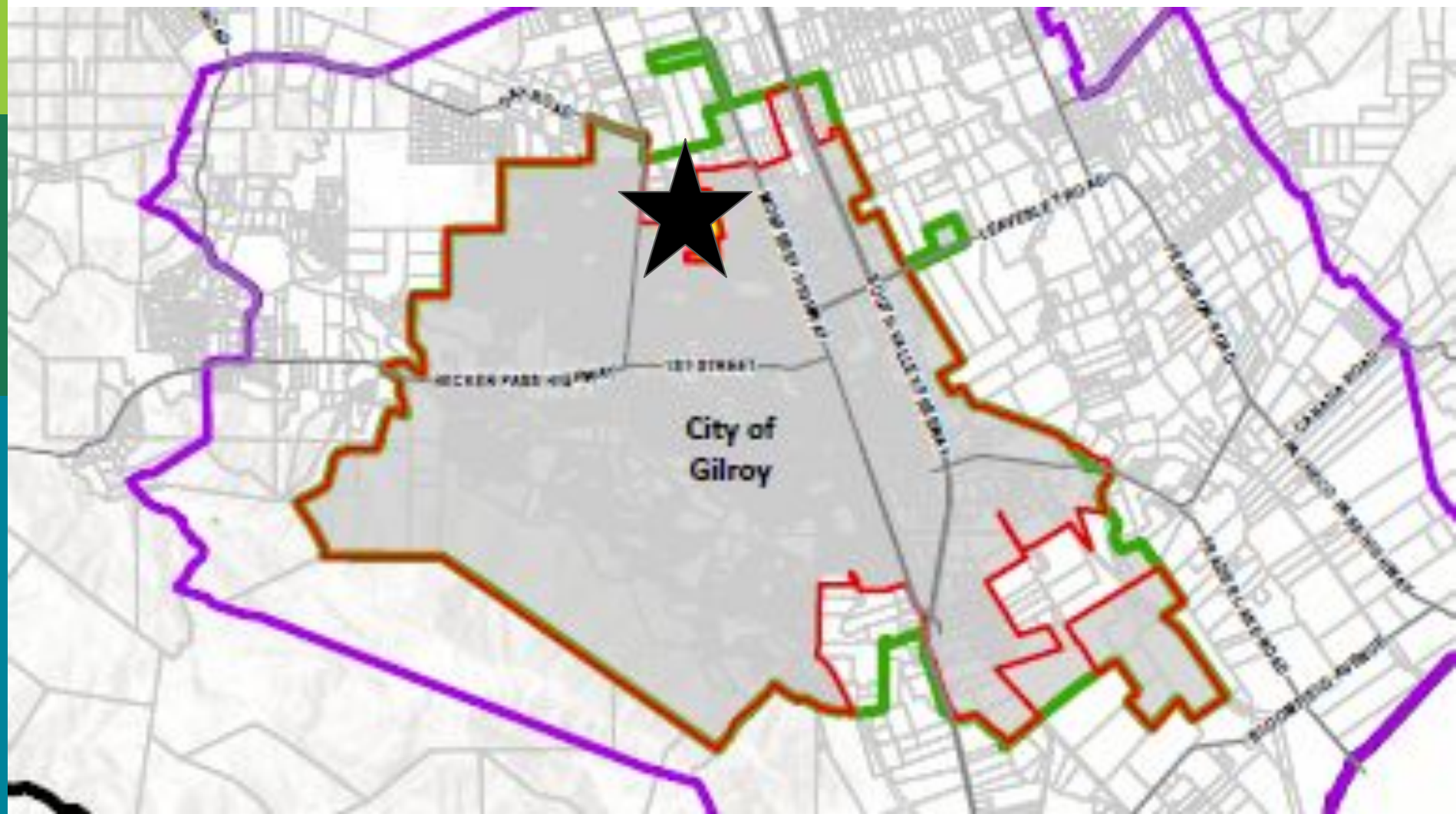
# Sprawl is still happening





# Gilroy's future: climate resilience or foolhardy sprawl?









Local Agency Formation Commission  
of Santa Clara County

**About LAFCO**

**Meetings  
and Agendas**





# **Tell LAFCO to deny Gilroy's application**

**Hearing date and location:**

**August 2, 2023, 1:15 pm  
70 W. Hedding (Board Chambers)  
San Jose, CA**

**To email LAFCO, go to:  
[GreenFoothills.org/lafco-blog](https://GreenFoothills.org/lafco-blog)**

**(Details and link will be sent out via email)**





# Bridging the Climate/Housing Gap

Jordan Grimes,  
Resilience Manager



@GBELTALLIANCE



WWW.GREENBELT.ORG



@GREENBELTALLIANCE



@GREENBELTALLIANCE



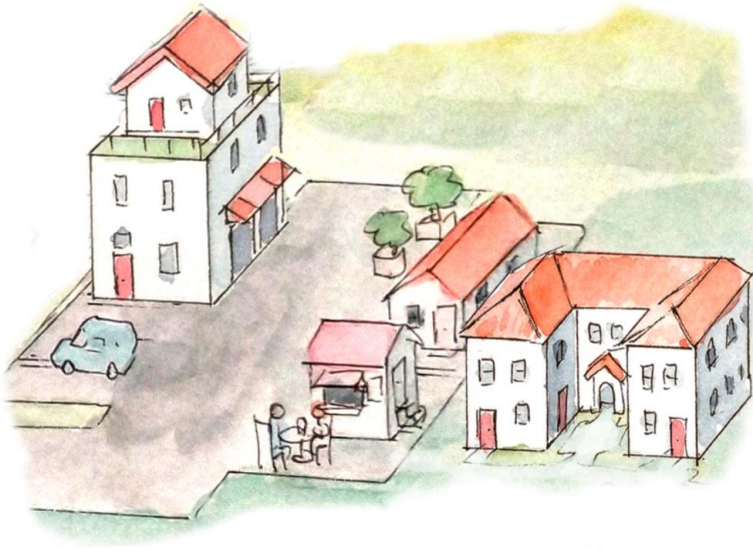
We envision a Bay Area  
of **healthy, thriving,**  
**resilient communities**  
made up of lands and  
people that are **safe**  
during climate disasters  
and **recover quickly** from  
wildfire, floods, and  
drought.



Karl Nielsen



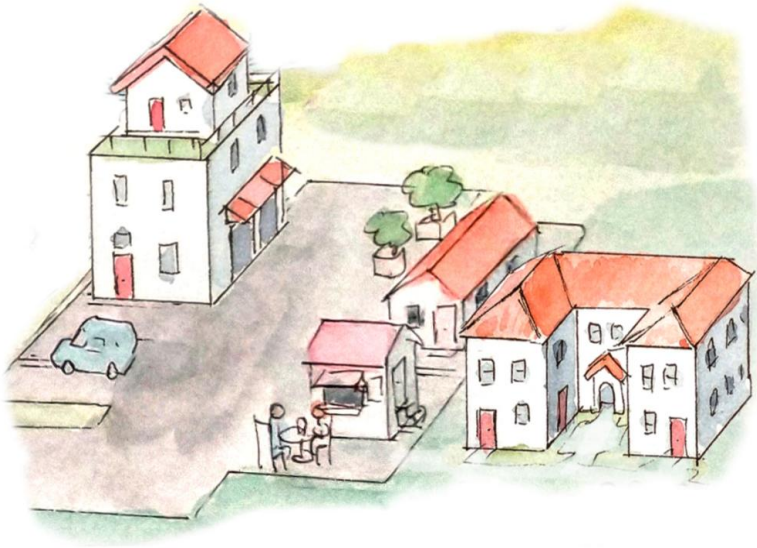
# Why does where we build matter?



## Transportation

- In the US - transportation is 30% of GHG emissions
- In California - transportation is 38% of GHG emissions
- Shifting to growth within cities could reduce equivalent of 400k cars

# Why does where we build matter?



## Denser Forms of Development Can Reduce

- Dependence on personal vehicles
- Travel time and costs
- Consumption of oil and gas
- GHG emissions



## How Can Building New Homes Reduce Emissions?



## Where we build matters, even within our region

- Smaller homes use less energy, ADUs, duplexes, fourplexes etc
- Zoning changes - no cost path to reduce emissions

## How Can Building New Homes Reduce Emissions?



## What Type of Housing We Build Matters

- New standard have more sustainable construction and operations
- Single family suburban home produces 3x yearly emissions as an urban home



# IPCC Report: Housing is a Critical Strategy to Reduce Emissions



**“There is a rapidly closing window of opportunity to secure a livable and sustainable future for all...the choices and actions implemented in this decade will have impacts now and for thousands of years”**

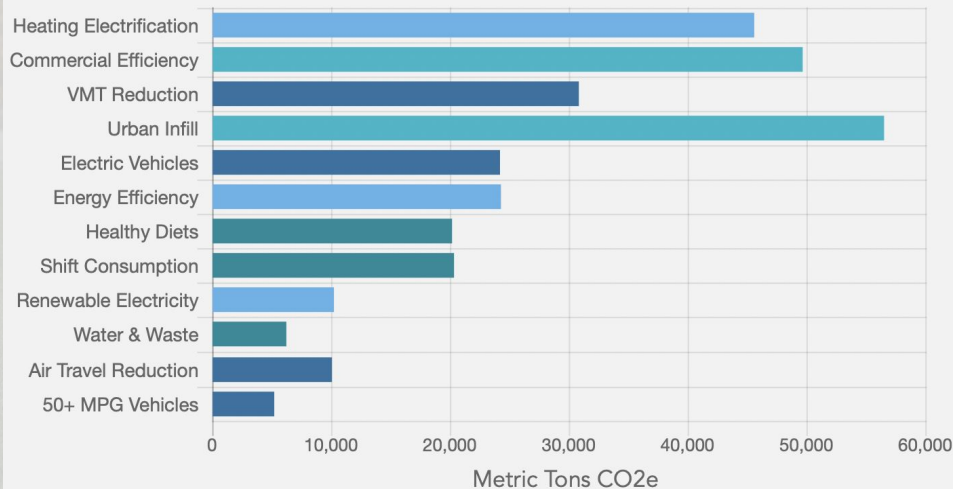
**“Established cities will achieve the largest GHG emissions savings by replacing, repurposing, or retrofitting the building stock, strategic infilling, and densifying.”**

**IPCC chair Hoesung Lee**

Location 1

[Q SEARCH LOCATION](#)

### GHG Reduction Potential in 2030 from Local Policies



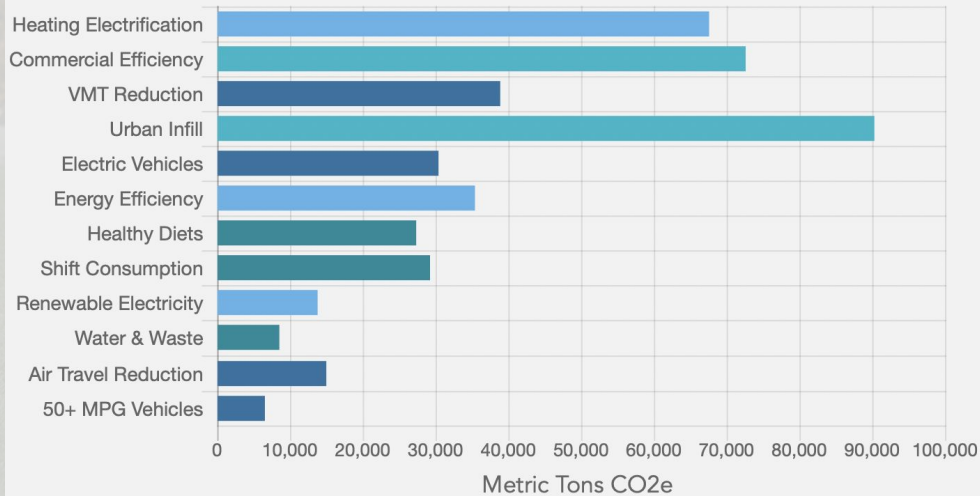
# Housing, Climate, and the Peninsula



Location 1 PALO ALTO

Q SEARCH LOCATION

### GHG Reduction Potential in 2030 from Local Policies



# Housing, Climate, and the Peninsula

A photograph of a tree-lined residential street. The street is paved with a concrete sidewalk, and there are large, mature trees on both sides. Multi-story houses with balconies are visible in the background. A person is walking on the sidewalk in the distance, and a small dog is visible near the foreground. A black lamppost stands on the left side of the sidewalk.

## The False Choice: To Build, or Not To Build

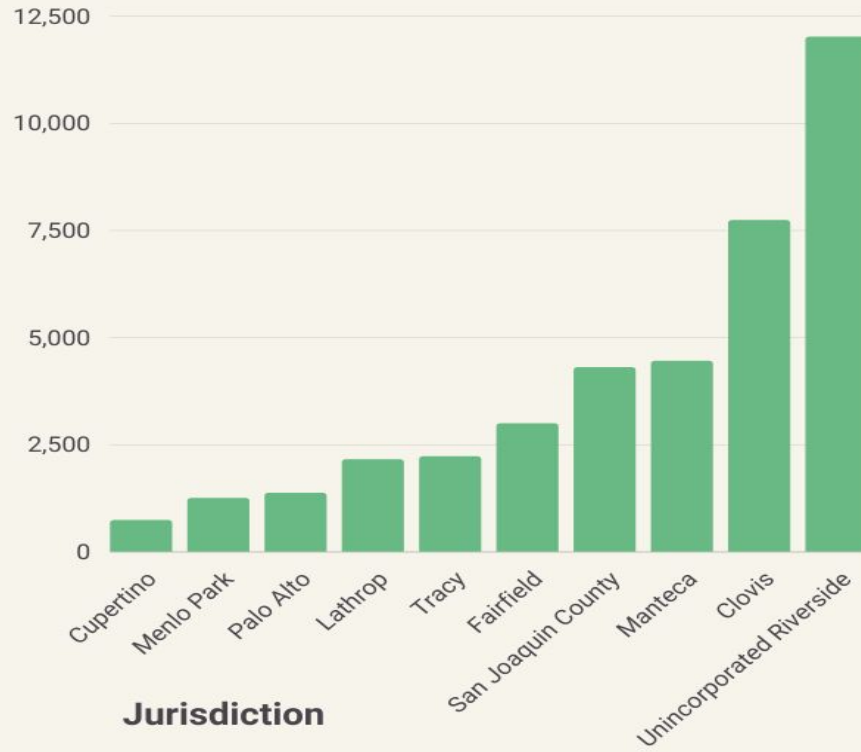
**What happens when we prevent new multifamily housing construction in our cities and suburbs?**

California has an incredibly high demand for new housing. If urban infill doesn't happen, that housing still gets built, though maybe not near you.

It manifests itself as single-family sprawl, gobbling up farmland, open space, and other environmentally sensitive areas, harming us all.

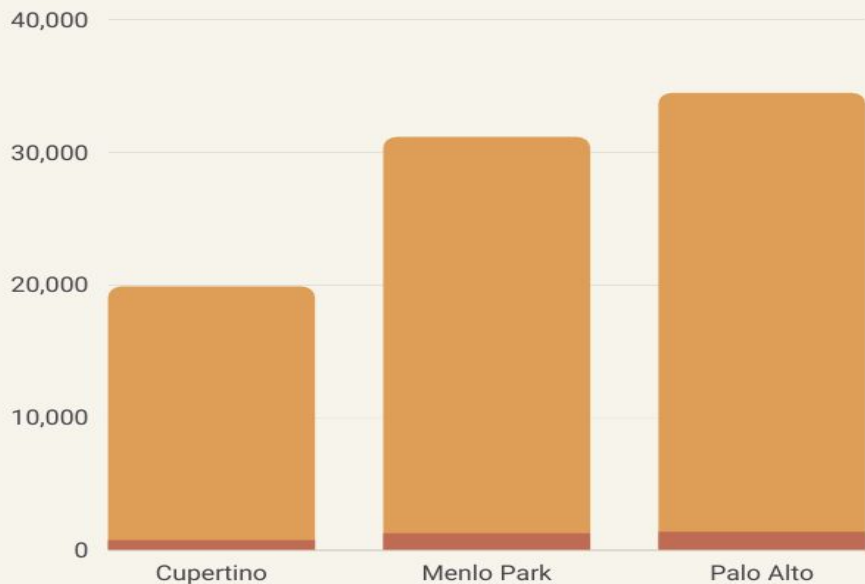


Building Permits Issued, 2010-2019



## Building Permits: Coastal vs Central California

Jobs Added, Permits Issued, 2010-2019



Jurisdiction

**Jobs and  
Housing on  
the Peninsula**



# Town building

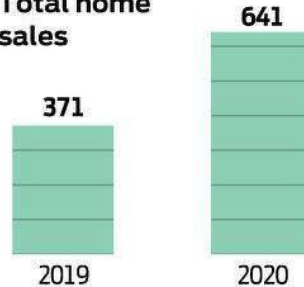
## River Islands, Lathrop

**Location:** on the San Joaquin River

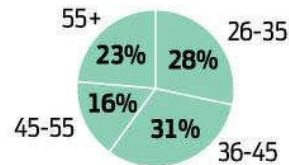
**Size:** 5,000 acres

**Plan:** approved for 11,000 residences, eight schools, a new downtown

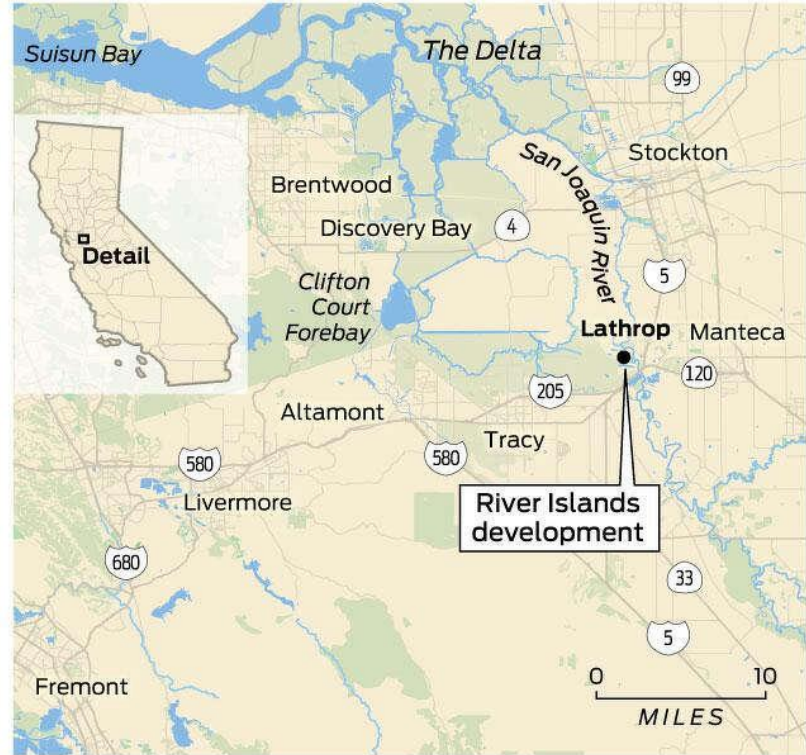
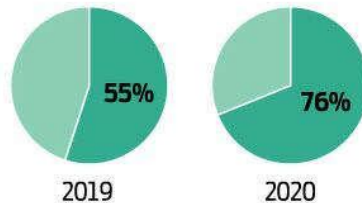
Total home sales



Average age of buyers



Percentage of Bay Area buyers



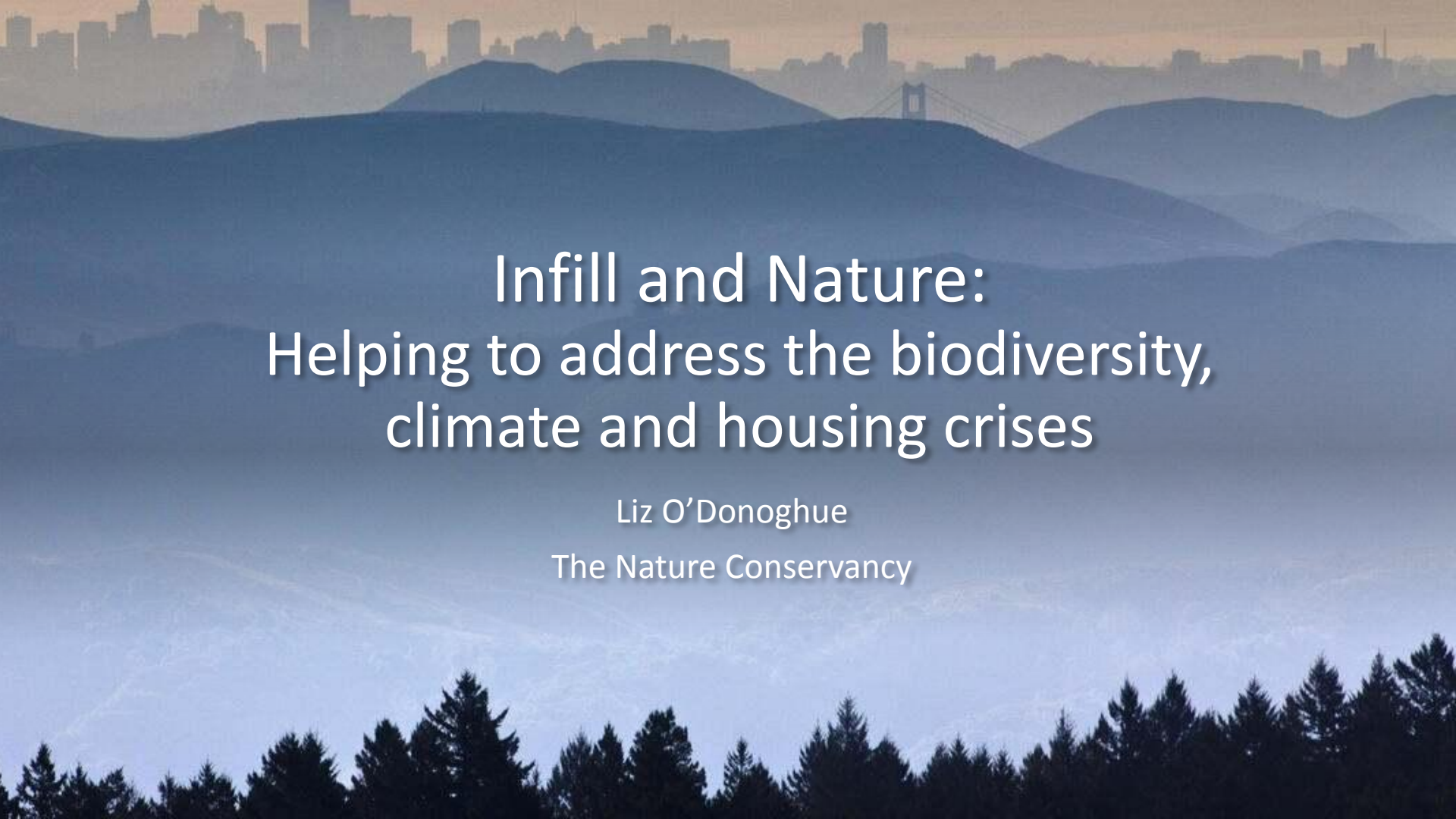
Source: River Islands Development

John Blanchard / The Chronicle

## The Alternative To Infill: Climate Unsafe Sprawl

A 1,400-home development planned on the northern outskirts of the Bay Area would come with fire-breaking vineyards, flame-detecting cameras, fire-safe refuges and brush-devouring goats. All that's missing is a flame-retardant suit for every proud new homeowner. They may well need one: The site in Lake County has been burned by more than 10 wildfires since the 1950s, according to a lawsuit against the project, five of them in the past 15 years.





# Infill and Nature: Helping to address the biodiversity, climate and housing crises

Liz O'Donoghue  
The Nature Conservancy

# The Nature Conservancy

- The **mission** of The Nature Conservancy is to conserve the lands and waters on which all life depends.
- Our **vision** is a world where the diversity of life thrives, and people act to conserve nature for its own sake and its ability to fulfill our needs and enrich our lives.















**2.5 MILLION  
HOMES  
NEEDED**

Very Low Income  
**643,352**

Low Income  
**384,910**

Moderate Income  
**420,814**

Above Moderate Income  
**1,051,177**







# Insurance giant halts sale of new home policies in California due to wildfires

**State Farm also cites inflation of construction costs in statement which comes after increasing wildfires in state**



*The Guardian, May 27, 2023*

# *Arizona Limits Construction Around Phoenix as Its Water Supply Dwindles*

In what could be a glimpse of the future as climate change batters the West, officials ruled there's not enough groundwater for projects already approved.



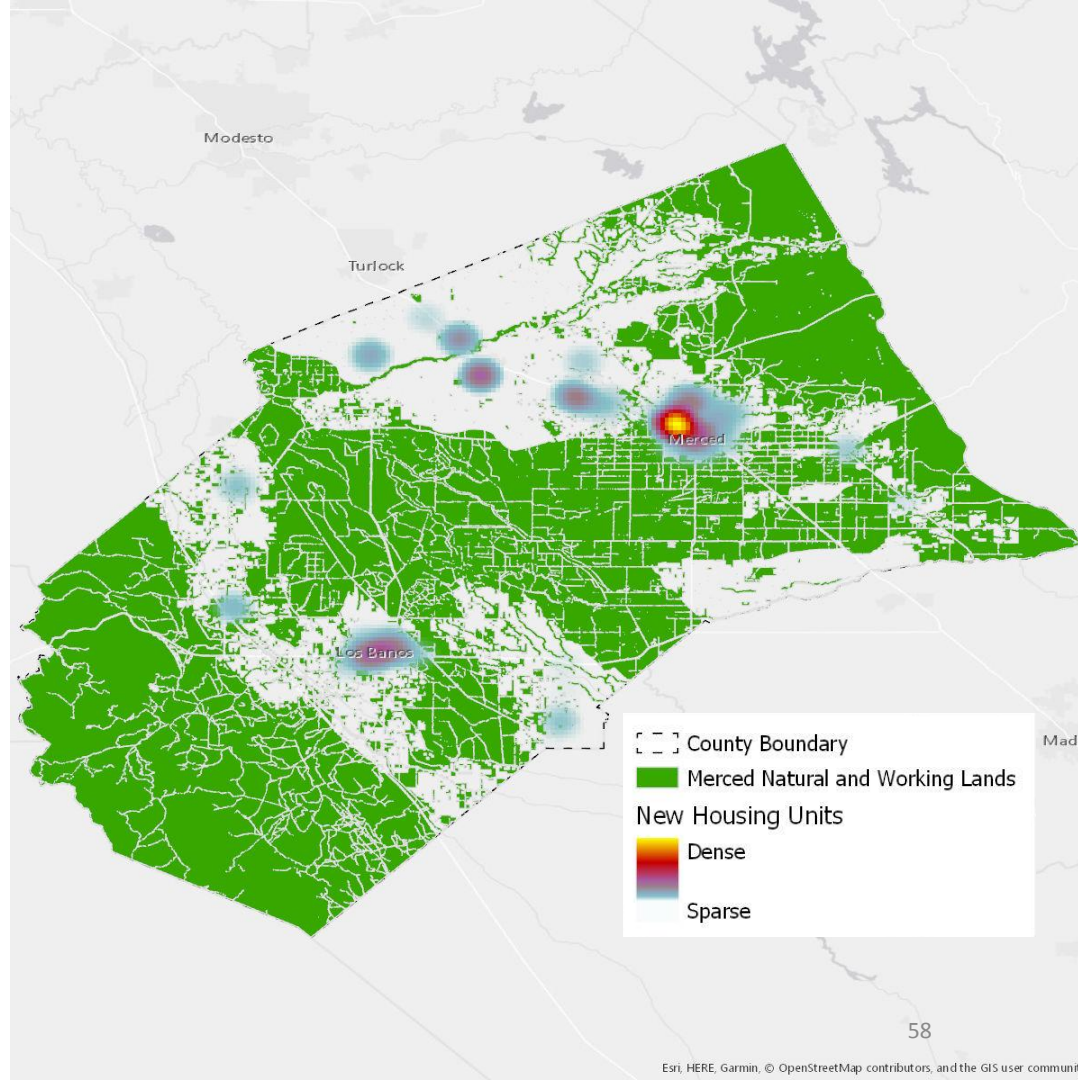
*New York Times, June 1, 2023*





Can we indeed achieve both?

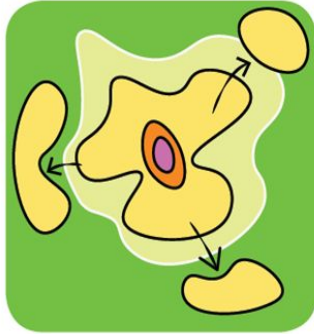
## The Integrated Planning Scenario in Merced County






## RECENT TRENDS

Continue to annex and develop agricultural and natural areas according to historic growth patterns



 Natural + Working Lands

## DENSE + DISPERSED

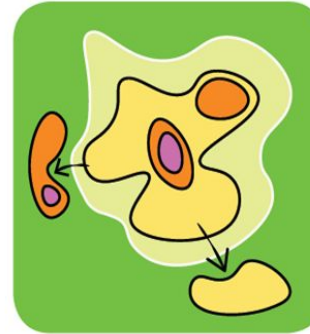
Build higher density housing on large vacant parcels



 Other Lands

## TYPICAL PLANNING APPROACH

Attempt to balance typical planning priorities



 Dispersed Development

 Compact Development

## INTEGRATED PLANNING APPROACH

Protect natural and working land and incentivize development in existing urbanized areas



 Downtown Development



# Housing Solutions are Climate Solutions

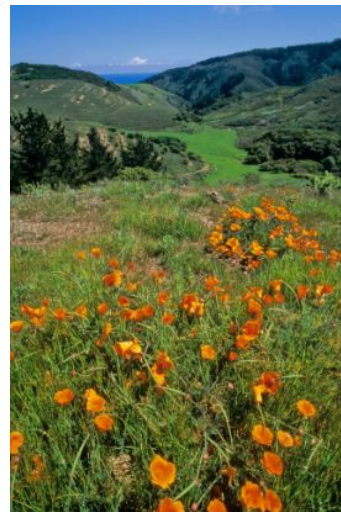
[Learn More](#)

**California can combat our severe housing  
shortage and meet critical climate goals.**





*Image: Santa Clara Valley Open Space  
Authority*



*TNC*



*Image: Opticos*



*Image: Mercy  
Housing*

## San Francisco Bay Salt Ponds



*Jassen Todorov/TNC Photo Contest 2022*



# Q&A



**What can I  
do?**







- Join any of our hosting organizations
- Have conversations with friends and neighbors
- Elect leaders who support both infill housing and the natural environment
- Send letters and emails to City Council with personal messages as to why you support housing
- Support a project locally at a public hearing
- Take action for Gilroy at the August 2 LAFCO hearing (details will be sent via email)

